Mindfulness Meditation for Cambodians

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GARDNER CORPORATIONS

The Gardner Corporations provide comprehensive health care services dedicated to improving the health status of the low and moderate-income communities in Santa Clara County, especially the disenfranchised, poor and most vulnerable members.

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Our mission is to provide high quality behavioral, social and primary care to include education, prevention, treatment, intervention, early intervention, treatment and advocacy services which are affordable, respectful, culturally, linguistically and age appropriate.
# GFCC - Mental Health Department

## Centro De Bienestar – Center of Well Being

### Service programs

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### Cambodia in the History

- Khmer Kingdom (AD 802)
- French Colonial Period (1863)
- Administration of Sihanouk Khmer Republic and War (1953)
- Pol Pot Regime (1975)
- Killing Field (1975- 1979)
Cambodians in the United States

• Cambodians are the most traumatized population with well-documented mental health problems.
• After two decades after resettlement in U.S.A., study showed high rates of mental health problems such as PTSD (62%) and Depression (51%) (Marshall et al., 2005).
• Potential impact of Cambodians’ trauma on their current life functioning.
• Low level of acculturation
  • Poor English proficiency – 53% categorized as limited English proficient (APIAHF, 2005).
  • Poverty/Income — approximately 54% live below the 200% poverty level line (U.S. Census, 2000).
  • Education Attainment— only 9% have a bachelor’s degree and 53% have less than a high school education (APIAHF, 2005).
Gardner’s CCFS Program

- Gardener Family Care Corporation has been providing culturally competent mental health services to Cambodian community through Cambodian Culturally Specific Family Services (CCFS) since 1999.

- CCFS has been offering family-focused mental health services to low-income Cambodians in Santa Clara County.

- Cambodian program staff provides linguistically and culturally sensitive counseling, case management, medication services to individual and families with emotional and psychiatric problem

CCFS program provides:

- Comprehensive system of care to Cambodian clients.
  - The spectrum of services: crisis intervention, individual counseling, group counseling, family counseling, medication support and case management.

- Family focused services: family assessment, linkage, referral, family, marital counseling, child-rearing training, and self-help group.

- Places of Services: clinic, home, school, community agencies including faith-based organization.

- Individualized service: to meet the specific cultural and treatment needs of the clients and the families.

- Culturally specific mental health services: unique cultural strengths, traditions, and communication methods and styles are used.

- “Mindfulness Meditation Group”:
  - Culturally competent mental health services within the context of Cambodian cultural traditions and religious (Buddhist) philosophy.
  - Developed based on Buddhist philosophy to assist participants to reduce PTSD symptoms of clients and improve daily functioning.
Development of the Meditation Group

- 2006 visiting Cambodia and local Buddhist temple
- Cultural factors in Cambodian and Cambodians in U.S.
- Roles of Buddhist monks in Cambodian culture
- Meditation and mental health treatment
- Collaboration with Buddhist monks.

Buddhism and the concept of *Karma*

- The main concept of Buddhism is *Karma* (Kam in the Cambodian language), which is defined as “the individual's actions or thoughts (often of an evil nature) in a prior existence that affects life in the present” (Hsu, Davies, & Hansen, 2004, p.198).
- Some Cambodians believe that personal hardship in the current life (e.g., war-related trauma) was predestined as a form of *Karma* (from the past life).
- Feeling of shame about the trauma and/or refuse to talk about the experience, or some might accept sufferings as being ‘righteous’. And, the concept of *Karma* in Buddhism teaches the importance of the “here and now” and “future-oriented” approach.
- One can create a positive *Karma* for the future in the present life: An approach cultivating mindful awareness of *Karma* in a sense of “here and now” should be implemented.
Service Delivery:
Working with a Buddhist Monk as a para-professional

- Professional help is sought after all personal/familial resources are exhausted.
- Cambodian clients are known to have a high rate of premature termination of treatment (Chung, 2001).
- The healing process in Cambodian culture occurs through a system of rituals facilitated by healers (e.g., Buddhist monks) - helping professions (Musser-Granski and Carrillo, 1997).
- Having the Buddhist monk as a para-professional may promote the efficacy of treatment as embracing Cambodians’ cultural belief system.

Mindfulness Meditation

- Use of the concept of Karma, as well as the somatization of emotional distresses, mindfulness meditation (MM) based on Buddhist concepts needs to be one of the treatment components.
- MM has shown substantial benefits for individuals suffering from chronic pain, depression, and anxiety disorders including PTSD (Astin, 1997; Grossman et al., 2004).
- The focus is on the progressive acquisition of mindful awareness about self and the world as comprehending Karma and creating a new positive Karma in every moment.
Mindfulness Meditation at Gardner

- 12 sessions, 80 minutes per session
- Facilitators: a Buddhist monk and two mental health clinicians
- Topics:
  - Mindfulness Meditation - 1 session
  - Metta (Loving-Kindness) - 2 sessions
  - Karuna (Compassion) - 2 sessions
  - Mudita (Sympathetic Joy) - 2 sessions
  - Upekka (Equanimity) - 2 sessions
  - Purification from Mental Defilements - 2 sessions
  - Peaceful mind in daily life - 1 session
- Schedule: lecture, meditation, discussion
Pilot PSCTG Program

- Addressing compounded trauma - war (pre-migration) and acculturation related stress (post-migration) and disruption of cognition based on the theoretical framework (shattered assumption theory and acculturation theory);
- Addressing somatization as the characteristics of PTSD Cambodians experience;
- Addressing the perception of trauma and the adaptation process within a cultural value system, such as the Buddhist concept of Karma;
- Addressing para-professional's (Buddhist monk in this case) effectiveness in mental health settings as promoting service delivery outcomes
- Addressing the empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the PSCTG program and its applicability to other agencies.

Overview of the Current Pilot PSCTG program

- Clinical components based on theoretical foundation
- Cultural Belief: Buddhism/Concept of Karma
- Compounded trauma & disruption of cognition: pre/during/post migration
- Somatization of trauma/The characteristics of PTSD among Cambodians
- Hypothesized outcomes
- Reduced PTSD symptoms: Trauma related & Family stress related
- Cognitive Psychology Treatment and Modified Family Therapy
- Mindfulness Meditation within a Buddhism context
- Cambodian Buddhist monk as a para-professional
- Collaboration with a surrounding Cambodian Community
- Bilingual/bicultural clinician
Findings:
Potential Usefulness of the Program

References


